

Massachusetts Forest Stewardship Program

Policy on Eligible Stewardship Acres

May, 2009

Joint Stewardship/Chapter 61/61A/61B plans: For any joint Stewardship/Chapter 61/61A/61B plan all acreage classified under the specified current use program must meet the requirements of M.G.L. Chapter 61/61A/61B. Those acres classified as Stewardship acres must meet the guidelines set forth below in **I. Areas Eligible as Stewardship Acres.**

Stewardship Only Plans: For Stewardship only plans all acreage classified as Stewardship acres must meet the guidelines set forth in **I. Areas Eligible as Stewardship Acres.**

I. Areas Eligible as Stewardship Acres

A. Forest and Accessory Land: Areas with existing tree cover and land which is accessory to the production of forest products as defined in M.G.L. Chapter 61 Section 8.02.

B. Abandoned Fields: Fields are considered abandoned if they are not being used for agriculture, i.e. to harvest hay or support livestock. If the field is not intended to succeed to forest then the primary goal should be to provide early successional wildlife habitat. In order for an abandoned field to qualify as Stewardship acres, the stand description must contain the following information: years since abandonment, acres, types of vegetation, relative abundance and distribution of vegetation, value of area for desired wildlife species and desired future condition for the “abandoned field” (stand). The management practice narrative for the “abandoned field” (stand) must contain the following information: explicitly state how desired future condition will be achieved and how the method, frequency and timing of maintenance will minimize adverse impacts on wildlife.

C. Wetlands: This includes all forested, scrub-shrub, emergent and beaver created wetlands. Stand descriptions must contain all the relevant information as required in the “*Directions for the preparation of the Chapter 61 Forest Management Plans and Forest Stewardship Plans,*” except the timber inventory data can be omitted if the stand is not a forested wetland. Particular attention should be paid to the wildlife and watershed protection values of each wetland and how those values will be protected by management.

D. Open Water Bodies: The plan must specifically address the values of the water feature and how to protect or enhance those values.

E. **Power Lines:** Power line rights of ways are eligible. Stand descriptions must contain all the relevant information as required in the “*Directions for the preparation of the Chapter 61 Forest Management Plans and Forest Stewardship Plans,*” except the timber inventory data can be omitted. Particular attention should be paid to the wildlife values of the right of way.

II. Areas Not Eligible as Stewardship Acres

- A. **Houses and Outbuildings:** Exclude the area around the house or outbuildings that is mowed lawn or landscaped.
- B. **Pasture**
- C. **Hay fields**
- D. **Tilled fields** (row crops)
- E. **Commercial orchards**
- F. **Commercial blueberry fields**
- G. **Commercial Christmas tree plantations**
- H. **Areas that are considered “Incompatible with forest production”**

III. Special Considerations

- A. As in Chapter 61, the minimum number of contiguous acres needed to qualify for the Stewardship Program reimbursement is ten (10). However, in contrast to the Chapter 61, for Stewardship, only **7 of the 10 contiguous acres** must have existing tree cover. The other 3 may be abandoned field or one of the other qualified types of land cover.
- B. Only areas qualifying as Stewardship acres as set forth above are eligible for Stewardship Plan.
- C. If the Stewardship Plan is removed from the Program during the seven (7)-year agreement (commitment) to the MA Forest Stewardship Program, the applicant will repay any reimbursement dollars received for the preparation of the Plan.

IV. Forest Stewardship Plan Eligibility for reimbursement

New Plans

Eligible: Privately owned woodlands of 10 acres or more (7 of which must be wooded), that are not currently enrolled in Forest Stewardship or Chapter 61, 61A or 61B programs, and which do not have a permanent conservation easement recorded on the property. Eligible private landowners include individuals, trusts, land trusts, clubs, LLC's, associations, and corporate entities. Municipally owned forest land parcels of 25 acres or more that are not permanently protected are also eligible. Leaseholders are eligible as well.

Not eligible: Entities principally engaged in the processing of wood products; properties with a permanent conservation restriction; and corporations with publicly held stock.

Up Grade of Existing Plans to Green Certification

Eligible: Landowners, both private and municipal, who commit in writing to enroll in the MA Private Lands Group Certification program that have an existing Forest Stewardship Plan or Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B forest management plan are eligible. Eligible private landowners include individuals, trusts, land trusts, clubs, LLC's, associations, and corporate entities. Municipally owned forest land parcels of 25 acres or more and entities principally engaged in wood processing and properties that are permanently protected are also eligible. Leaseholders are eligible as well.

Not eligible: Corporations with publicly held stock.